



Andrei Nekrasov

# FRIENDS







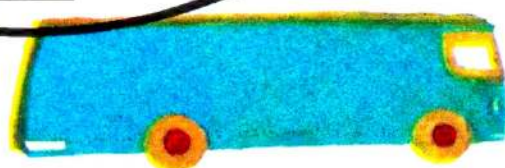
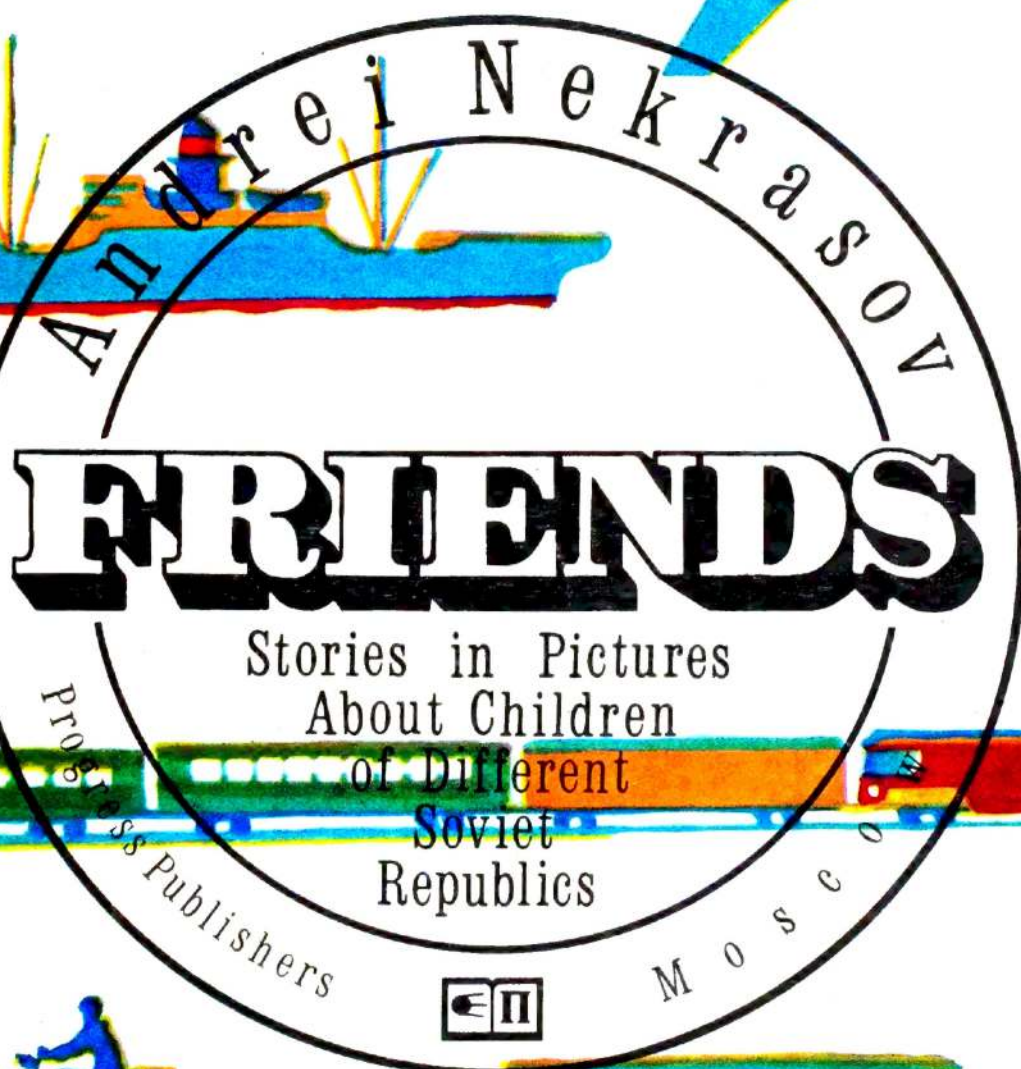
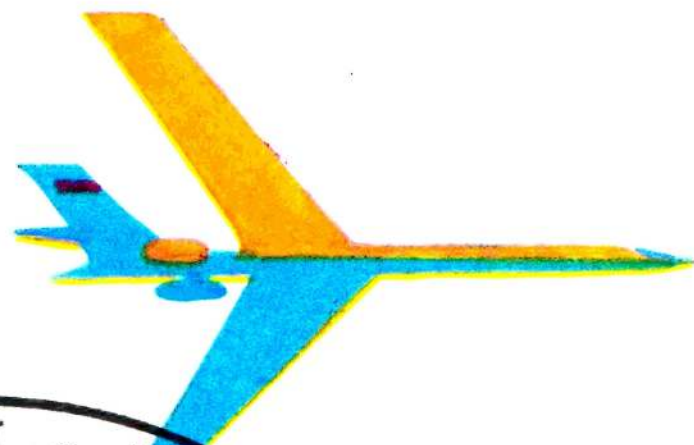




May There  
Always Be Sunshine

Designed by  
V.ALEXEYEV and N.GRISHIN









It all happened because the pupils of a school, a very ordinary school standing on a busy thoroughfare in Moscow, the capital of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, started wondering about children in other regions of their vast country—how did they live, what were their native parts famous for? So the Moscow children wrote letters to various republics and regions, to big cities and small villages in the north and the south, the east and the west of Soviet Russia. Off flew the letters to outlying regions from the very hub of the country.





And here it is, the hub of the Soviet Union, Red Square in Moscow.

The guard is changed at the Lenin Mausoleum. The Kremlin chimes strike off the hours, Moscow time. Watches are checked by the clock on Spassky Tower in all corners of our country, by polar expeditions in the Arctic Ocean and in the Antarctic, and by cosmonauts exploring outer space in Gagarin's footsteps.

Off flew the children's letters with questions. And before long the answers started arriving.









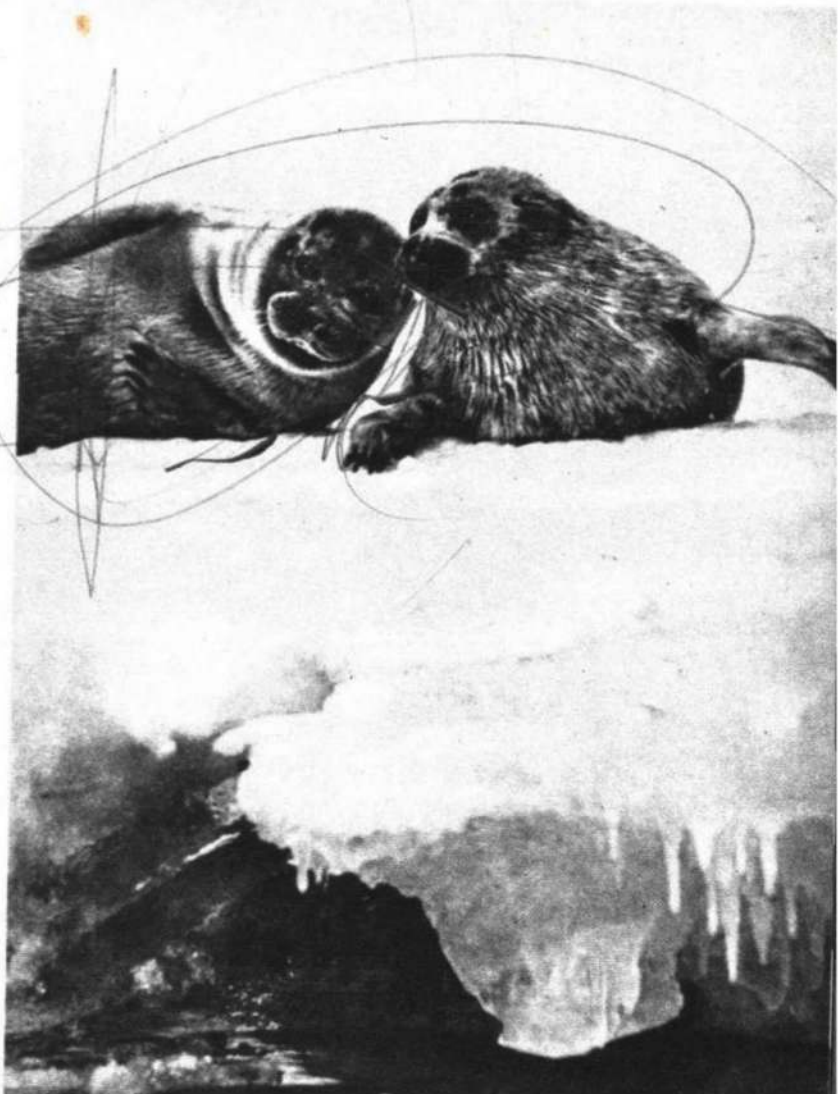
In our land of Chukotka there is a great lot of snow in winter, the sea is bound in ice and the sun does not come out at all for many long months. There are only the stars twinkling, and sometimes the Northern lights flash up in the frosty sky.

They say Chukotka has a rigorous climate. It's true enough and life used to be hard here. Our old people still remember how they spent winters in *yarangas*, deerskin tents lighted by wicks. But today we live in good houses and go to a good school, which are supplied with electricity by an atomic power station. The houses are heated by this station as well.

And in summer the tundra breaks into flower and the sun never sets at all. Then we often make trips to the seashore. Sometimes, if we are lucky, we see an icefloe with seals and little cubs. We thought about sending you a polar bear cub as a present, but polar bears live even further north, near the very North Pole.















We live in the wooded parts of European Russia. There are lots of mushrooms and berries in our woods. Our land is famous for its craftsmen. Have you ever seen a Matryoshka doll? You open the wooden doll and find another one exactly like it but a bit smaller inside. And inside that there is yet another one, smaller still, and so on until you come to the very littlest, which may be the size of a finger-nail, while the largest may be as big as a year-old baby.

Our craftsmen know how to choose the right kind of wood, how to dry it and how to turn and paint the Matryoshka. You will see their handiwork in many museums in our country and abroad.

We also learn how to make Matryoshkas. We want to be craftsmen like our fathers and grandfathers. Besides Matryoshkas they make wooden boxes in our village. We have already made some and painted them, too. It is very interesting and not too hard to learn. Come to our village and we shall show you how.









Our town of Abakan stands on the Yenisei River in Siberia. It is a Khakassian word meaning "bear's blood". In old times this was a real bears' wilderness. But today visitors from all over the world come to the village of Shushenskoye, which is not far from our town. They come to do homage to the memory of Lenin, who spent several years in exile here.

The Sayano-Shushenskaya hydro-electric power station which is now under construction will be a huge memorial to Lenin. When it starts producing electricity, there will appear more factories, highways and beautiful towns in Siberia. Even now there are a great many young towns here, and most of the people living in them are young, too: they are builders, engineers, teachers, and scientists. Also we have whole townships of scientists. Some of our children dream of becoming scientists, too. And why not? Once you have abilities and do your best.







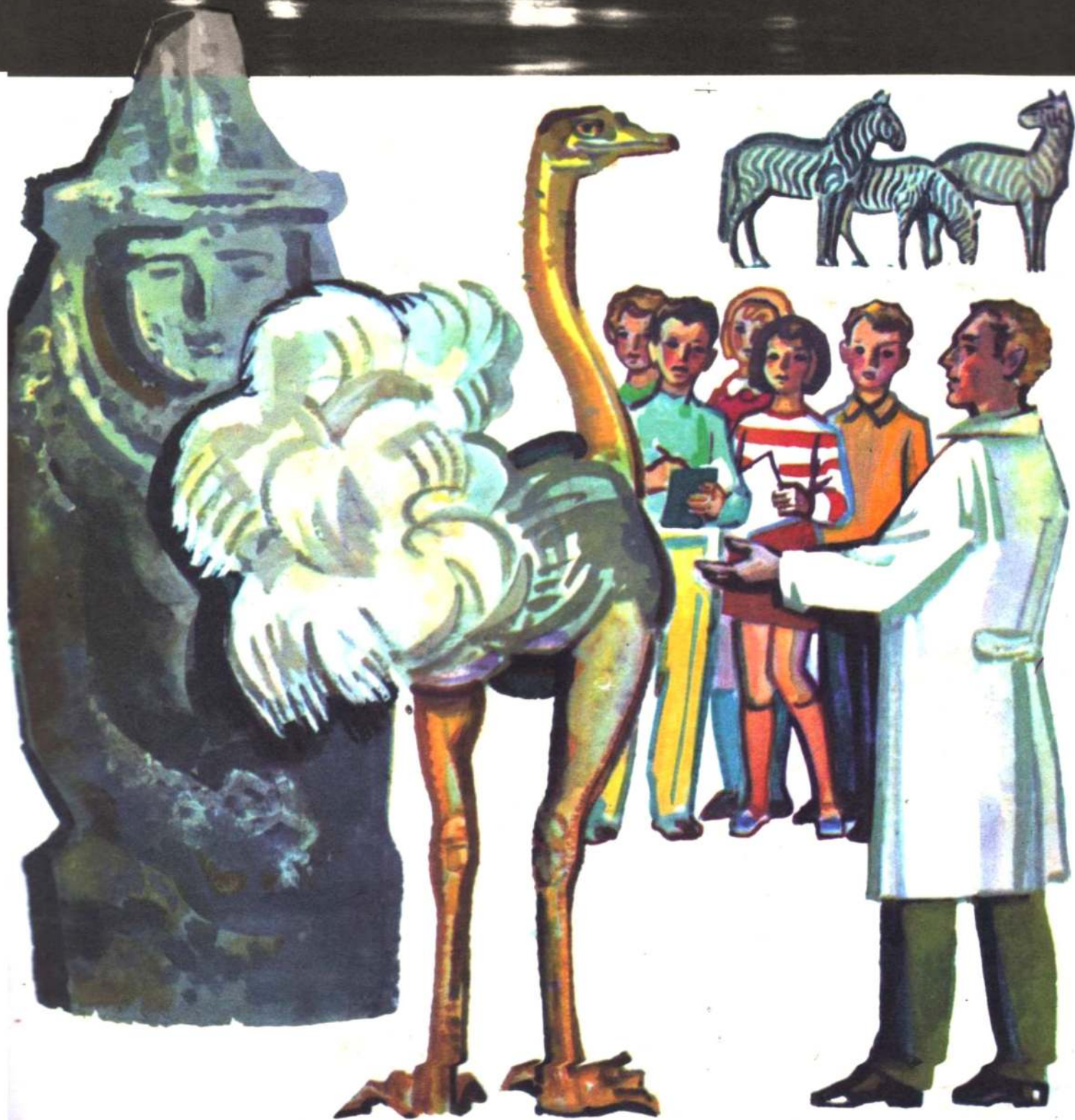
We live in the Ukraine in a township of foundry workers. Every one of us is a little bit of a foundryman. Also, as all children, every one of us is a little bit of an explorer. So, some time ago, we went on a trip, to a place two hundred kilometres away.

Our way lay across the steppe. In ancient times, the Scythians, the formidable nomadic warriors, used to sweep across this steppe. Their burial mounds still dot the plain here and there. And at one spot we saw a stone image by the road. Who put it there and why? Nobody knows the answer. The Scythians are long gone, and the steppe has changed greatly since their time.

The most interesting place we saw on our trip was the Askania-Nova wild nature preserve. There, right in the open steppe, live emu ostriches, zebras, antilopes and other outlandish animals. They have been brought here by the zoologists and acclimatised. You get a funny feeling when you see all those exotic animals. Is it your native Ukraine, or is it, perhaps, Africa or Australia?









This is not where we live all the time, we are only here for a stay. Children come for a stay in Artek, a pioneer camp on the shore of the warm Black Sea, from all parts of the Soviet Union and even from abroad. We are having a wonderful time here. We have made lots of new friends, we sit round campfires in the evening, singing songs in many languages of the world, dancing and playing games. We even have our own flotilla.

The sea in Artek is called Black, but in actual fact it is very blue and very warm. Sometimes we go out in launches to watch dolphins play in the water.

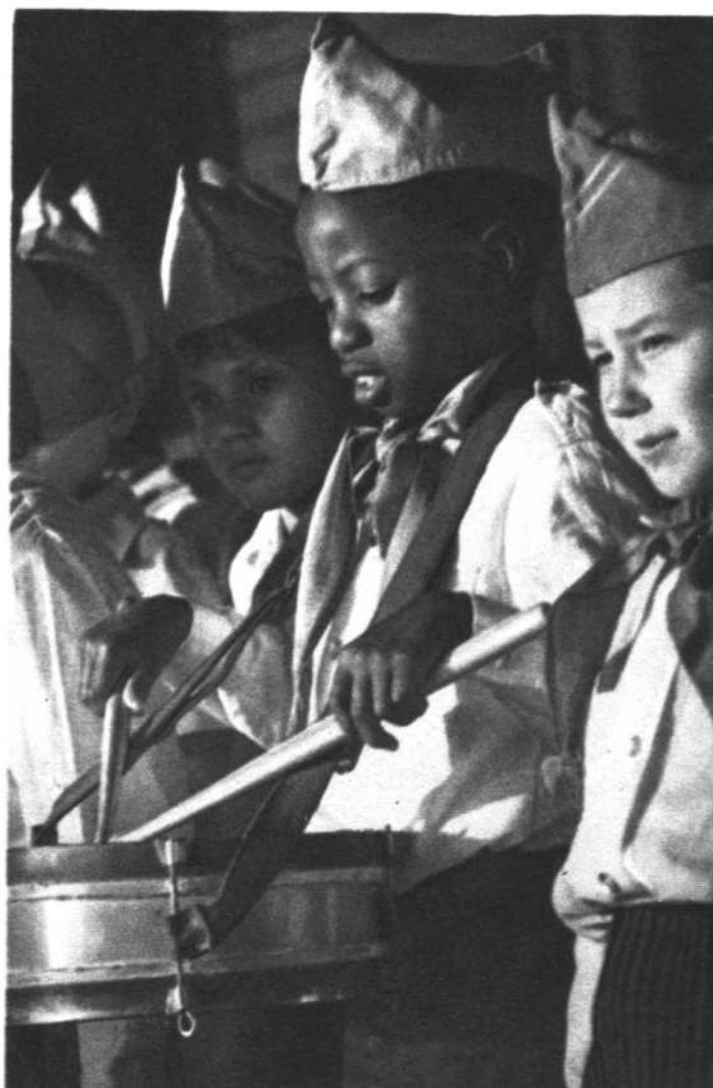
When we go home to our native cities and villages, we shall take along our Artek song:

*Deep-blue the skies are here,  
The surf sings loud and clear.  
Who lived here once, will always recollect  
The mountain towering high,  
The fires that blazed nearby,  
Artek, Artek! Artek!*

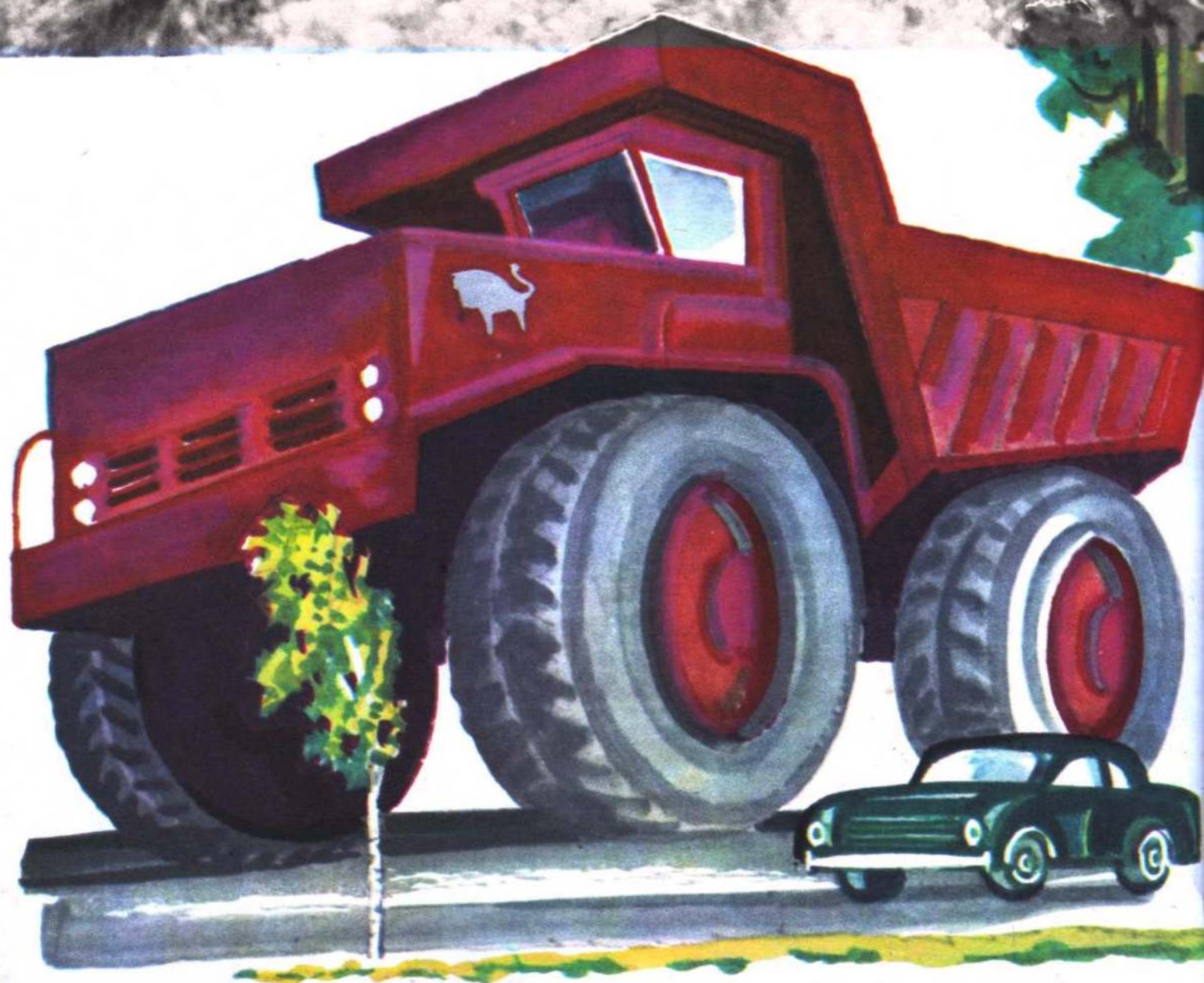
And the song will keep our friendship alive.















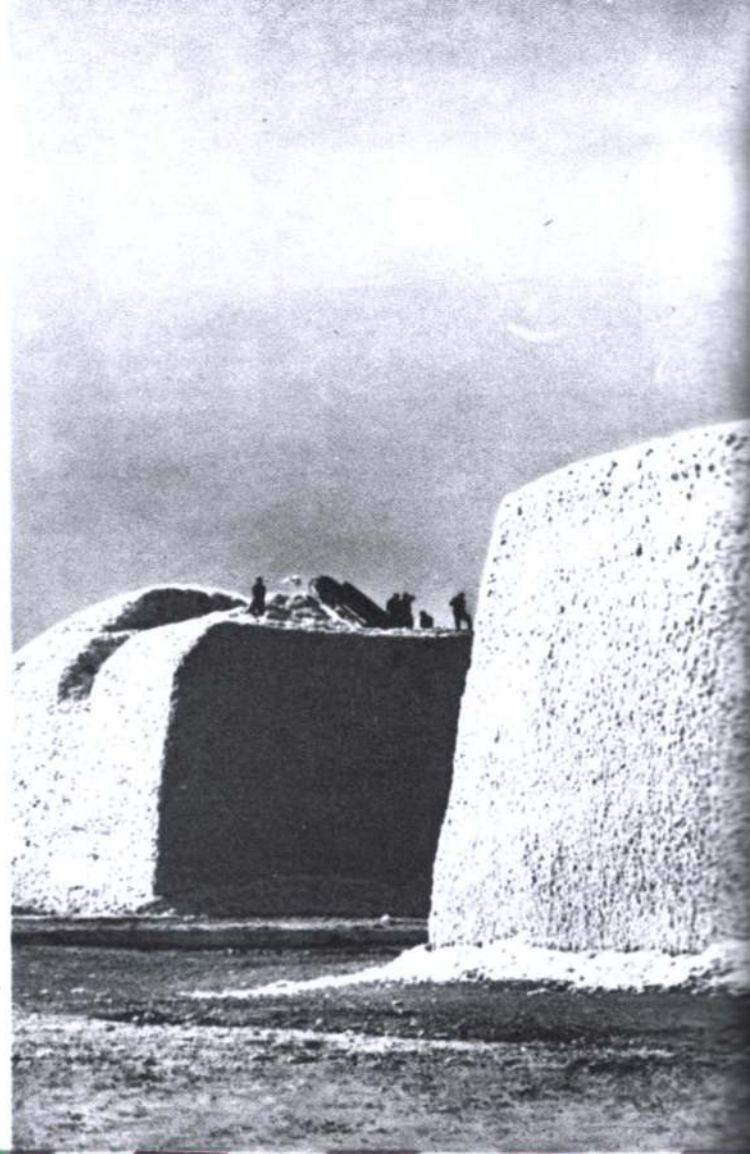
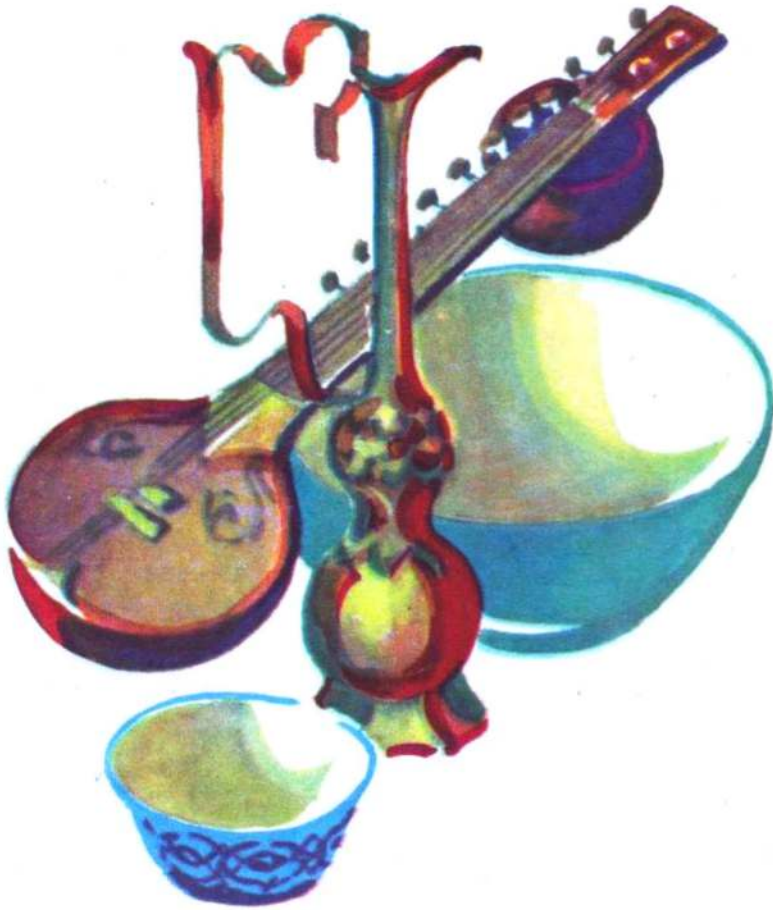
In old times Byelorussia was mainly known for its impassable roads, virgin forests and the huge bisons—aurochs.

Today swamps have been drained and ploughed up, and many roads have been built. But they all skirt one tract of land, Belovezhskaya Pushcha forest, which is now a nature preserve and where the aurochs roam at large. We have been there a number of times: we help zoologists to conduct observations of the life of aurochs, and we even feed dainty bits of young grass to baby aurochs. Whatever we see, we note down in our diaries.

Another thing our republic is now famous for is the huge Belaz tip-up lorries. They are made at a factory in Minsk, our Republic's capital, and they work all over the Soviet Union, from Central Asia to Spitsbergen, and also in Asia and Africa. Mounted on the lorry's radiator is the figurine of a powerful aurochs, and by that figurine you can recognise our Byelorussian tip-up lorry anywhere in the world.





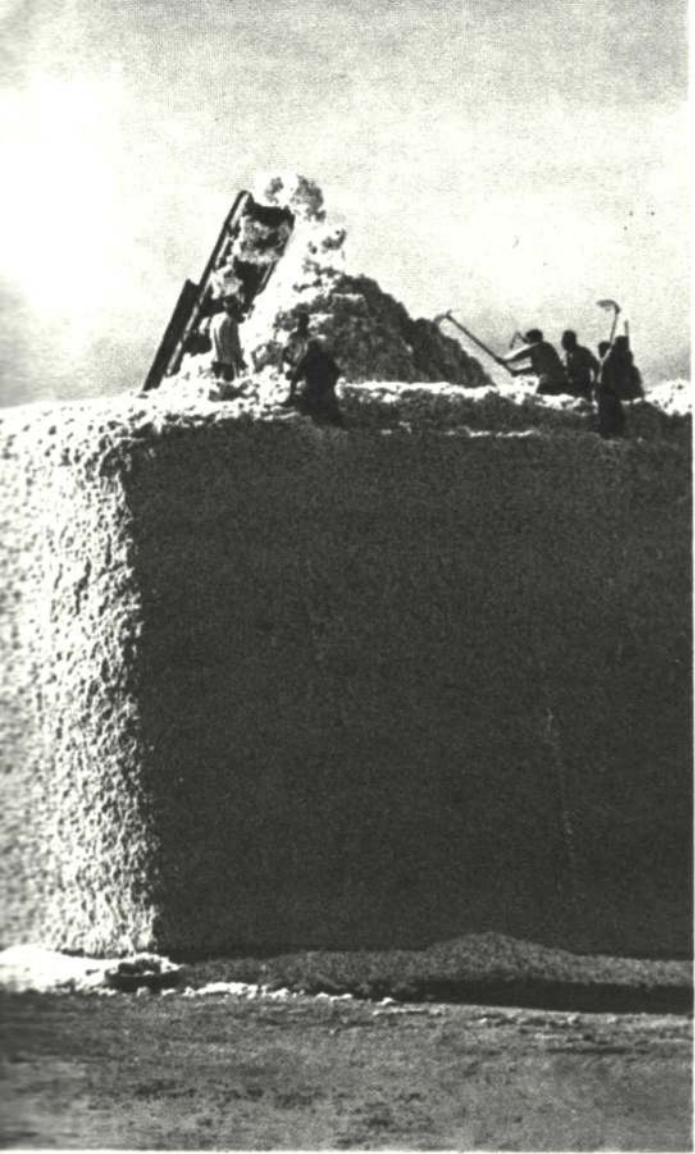


Our republic, Uzbekistan, is a cotton-growing land. So it has been for many centuries, but before the Revolution the *bais* became rich on our "white gold", while the peasants who grew cotton had nothing but rags. The Soviet power drove the *bais* away and gave the land to the peasants. New canals were dug to bring water to the cotton-fields, and our land became younger and happier. When the harvesting of cotton begins, all go into the fields. We schoolchildren help with the harvesting, too.

Ours is a very ancient land, and it is famous for its architectural monuments. The old mosques, madrasahs, observatories, mausoleums and palaces are protected by the state, and people come from all over the world to feast their eyes on their beauty. We welcome all guests. Come and see our land, there are plenty of interesting things we can show you.













For centuries our nomadic ancestors roamed the steppes of Kazakhstan, finding their way by the stars and thinking nothing of distant journeys. It was proper, therefore, that the world's first cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin should have started into immortality from our steppeland. The old people say that a hundred years ago the tsar exiled a certain Nikitin from the capital to Baikonur for seditious talk about a flight to the moon. Isn't it a joke? If only the tsar could have known that this spot was destined to become a launching pad for spaceships!

We like to play cosmonauts and trips to unexplored worlds.

In the old days the Kazakhs had but one road to follow—driving the herds across the dusty steppe. Now there are a great many roads open to us. If you give land your heart and your toil, it will reward you with first-class wheat, excellent coal and huge Alma-Ata apples.





Our land, Georgia, was glorified by our great poet Shota Rustaveli. Every Georgian is proud of his ancient country and its history. But even the ancient monuments and ice-crowned mountains bow to the knights of today risen to their full stature in a free republic, both ancient and young, an equal among equals.

These knights are our parents, ordinary Soviet people, orchard-growers and scientists, master-embossers and car-makers, dancers and sailors. Our poets have infused new sunshine into Rustaveli's lines and are handing them over to the future generations. No words can do justice to Georgia. The best thing to do is to come and see our lovely land with your own eyes. You will see beautiful palaces, you will swim in its warm sea and you will enjoy its famous hospitality.



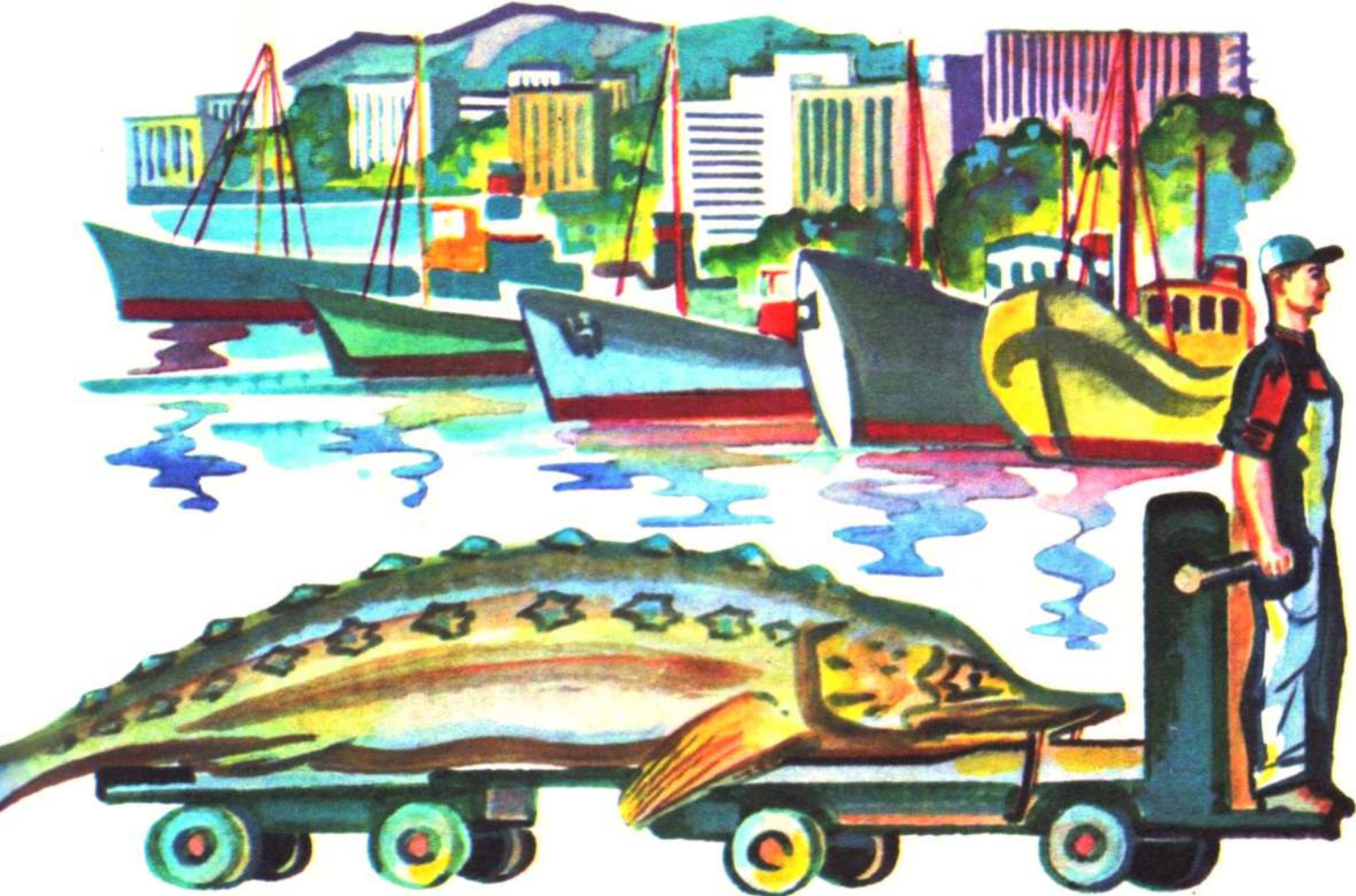












We live on the Caspian Sea, in Azerbaijan. Our sea is enclosed by land on all sides, but it carries real sea-going boats and our storms would do credit to any ocean. Ours are southern latitudes, but our sea becomes covered with ice in winter like in the North, and there are seals to be seen on icefloes. There is marvellous fish in our sea. Lamprey, for instance, if you dry it up, burns like a candle, while beluga sometimes grows to weigh all of a ton. And it's delicious, too, all the thousand kilograms of it.

Oil derricks march out far into the sea near our capital Baku. Azerbaijan supplies oil to many countries and our oilmen are great hands at pumping oil from the seabed.

Now, you probably want to know how things are in the Berberov family. The Berberovs brought up a lion, King, who became a famous film star. Unfortunately King died as a result of a tragic accident. Well, then, now the Berberovs are bringing up two lion cubs. We all envy the Berberov children, of course. Indeed, who wouldn't like to have his own tame lion? But our parents say we'll have to do with cats or dogs, for lions are much too big.







Formerly Lithuanian fishermen used to go out into the sea in small sloops and they had to keep close to the shore. Today big fishing vessels launch far into the Baltic and North seas and even out into the Atlantic. From those fishing expeditions our fathers bring us back weird fishes, starfish and pretty shells. But our own Baltic has a marvel of its own, the sun stone, amber. Every morning bits of it, tossed out by the waves, are to be found at the water's edge.

Some time ago we made a trip to our ancient capital Kaunas. We went to the Ciurlionis picture gallery there. Ciurlionis was a remarkable man of whom our nation is very proud; he was an original artist and a composer, too. Along the road to Kaunas we saw many beautiful lakes—our country has very many lakes—and picturesque ruins of old castles.

Handsome modern apartment houses often look on these ruins from their bright windows. They have been built by our fathers and elder brothers, as well as factories and tower plants. And we shall build the cities of the future.













Autumn is the best time of the year in Moldavia. There are so many apples, the branches bend down to the ground and have to be propped up. We also grow grapes, pears, plums and apricots. You must know our fruit very well in Moscow.

Autumn is a very busy time with us. Not that we are particularly idle in winter or summer. All our boys are great enthusiasts of aircraft model building and they have their hands full, what with building models and holding competitions. And the girls love singing and dancing. Generally we Moldavians are a musical people, and love merry-making. After the harvest is taken in in autumn, you will hear music, songs and laughter wherever you go. And when dancing starts, the earth trembles.

Do come to Moldavia in autumn. We shall treat you to lovely apples and grapes, and we shall sing and dance for you.





Our city stands on the banks of a wide river, the Daugava, where it flows into the Gulf of Riga. You could say the very city of Riga grew out of sea foam.

It is a very beautiful city, and perhaps that is why we are all beauty-conscious. All children in our school go in for drawing and painting. Besides, Latvians love poetry and singing. Even the fishermen hurry back from the sea to be in time for the annual song festival. A Day of Poetry is held in Riga every year, too, in memory of our great poet Janis Rainis.

If you come to Riga, we shall take you to our Domsby Cathedral to hear its famous organ, and to the Palace of Sports to watch a game of hockey or basketball. Meanwhile, most of you probably have a Riga-made refrigerator or a VEF transistor set at home to remind you of the city of Riga, the capital of Latvia.















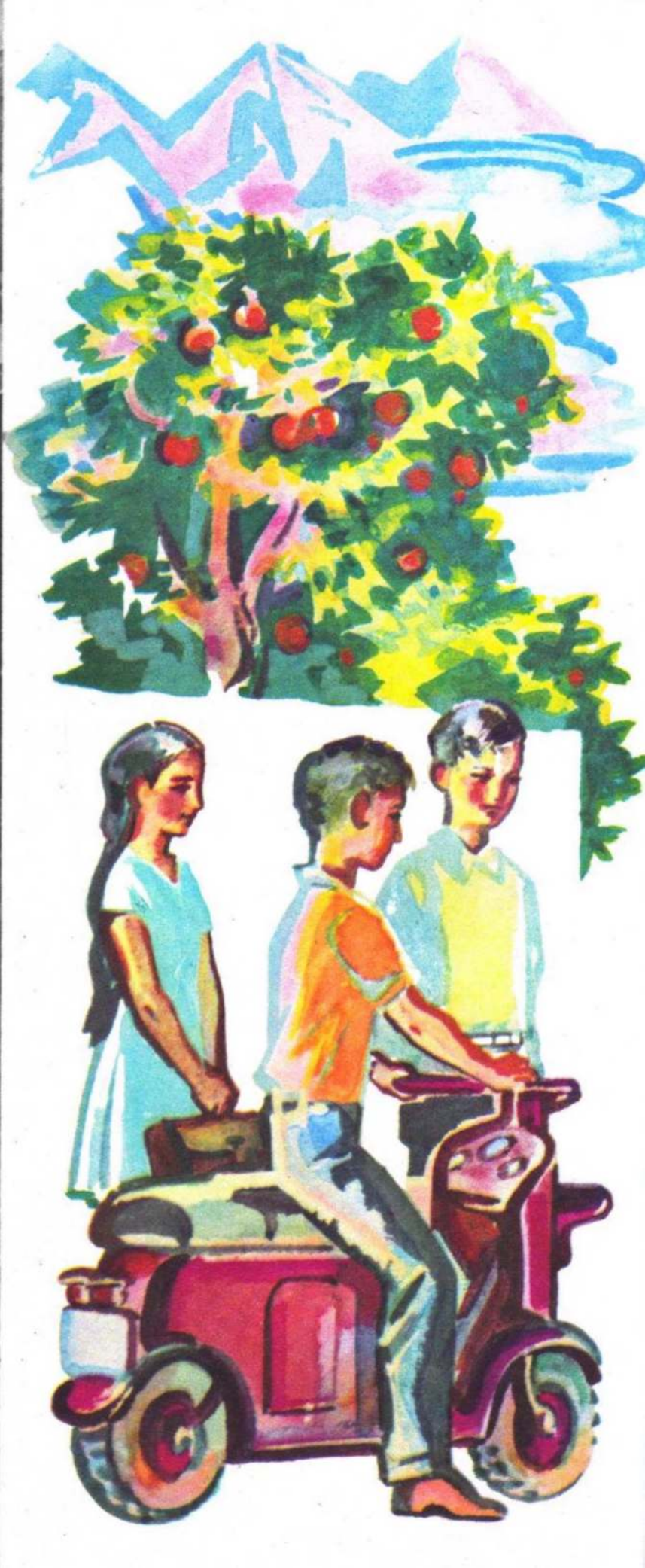
There are few places left on earth where they breed horses that can run as fast as our Kirghiz steeds and where riding is a national sport. As for hunting with a falcon, this sport has surely survived in Kirghizia alone.

Imagine a rider galloping along a mountain valley, his eyes scanning the sky. On his arm sits a trained falcon, its head covered with a hood. When the rider sees a duck or a partridge in the sky, he removes the hood and the falcon makes after the quarry.

Today helicopters soar above our mountains beside the eagles and powerful trucks roll along mountain roads. But there are still narrow paths, along which only a horse can make its way. And the horse serves faithfully geologists and geodesists, to say nothing of the shepherds. And there is no greater joy for a Kirghiz child than galloping along on a mettlesome stallion.









Our land, Turkmenia, is rich in nature's gifts. We have mountains and valleys, steppes and the sea. Herds of fine-fleeced sheep graze in mountain pastures, rich harvests are gathered from the fields, plentiful catch is brought in by our fishermen. And there is yet another wealth in Turkmenia, its wonderful songs about the past and the future.

Old men sing old songs to us about the feats of the warriors of past ages, and, as we listen to them, we dream of feats we are going to accomplish in new Turkmenia.

Many glorious a deed has already been performed by our people since the advent of Soviet power. Tractors have come to the fields, to take the place of the *ketmen*, the hoe. Where camel caravans used to trudge drearily across the stony *takyr* desert, cars speed along modern highways. New towns and new factories have risen on our land. But there is a great deal to do yet—to bring water to all corners of the desert, to stop the onslaught of the moving sands, to turn our land into one huge oasis. And this is what we study for—to accomplish these great tasks.







It took our forefathers several thousands years to clear the stone-strewn mountain slopes and turn them into vineyards. Today the wine made in Armenia is famous throughout the world.

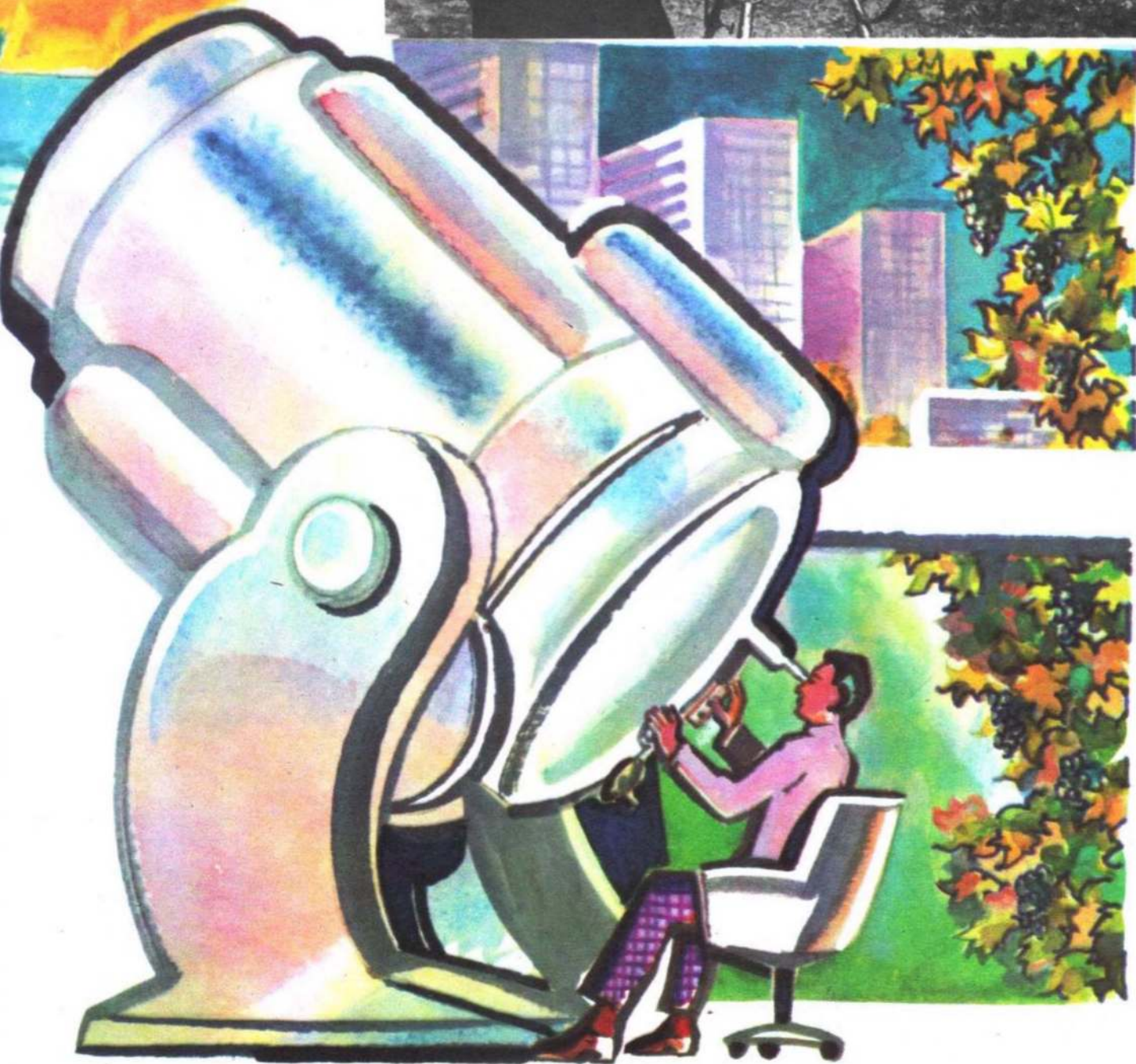
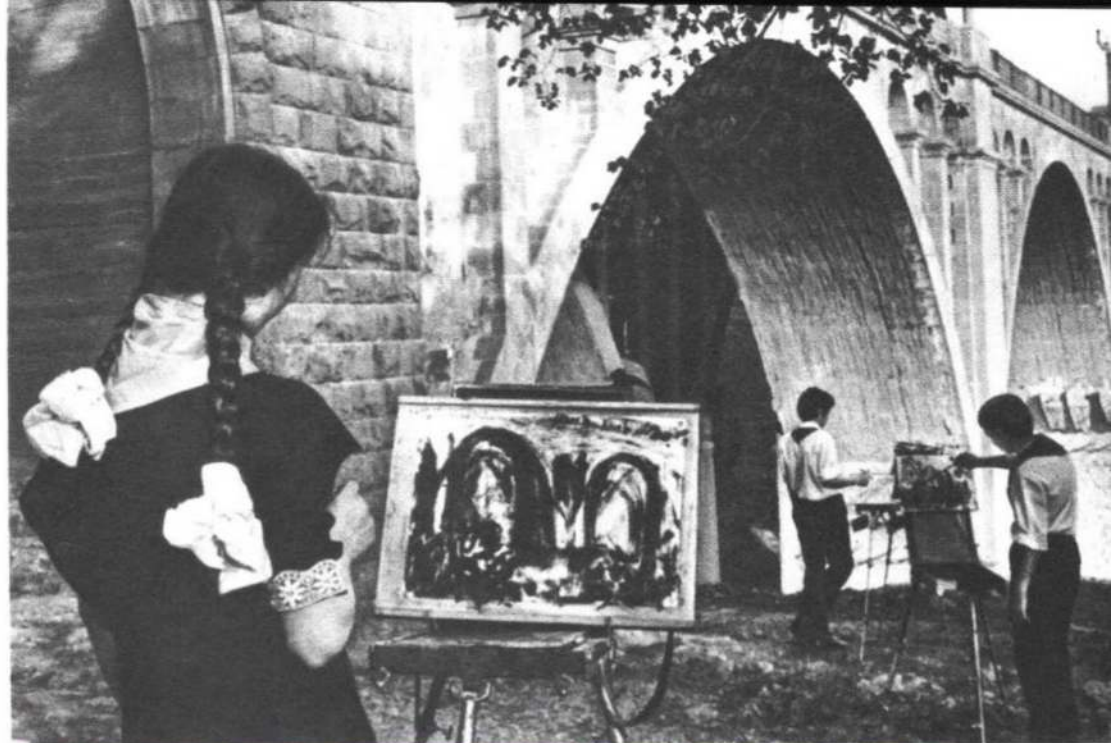
Our scientists have built themselves an observatory high in the mountains. Now the entire world defers to the opinion of our astronomers.

Since time immemorial gold and silver have been mined in our mountains, and Armenian jewelry is known far beyond the country's borders.

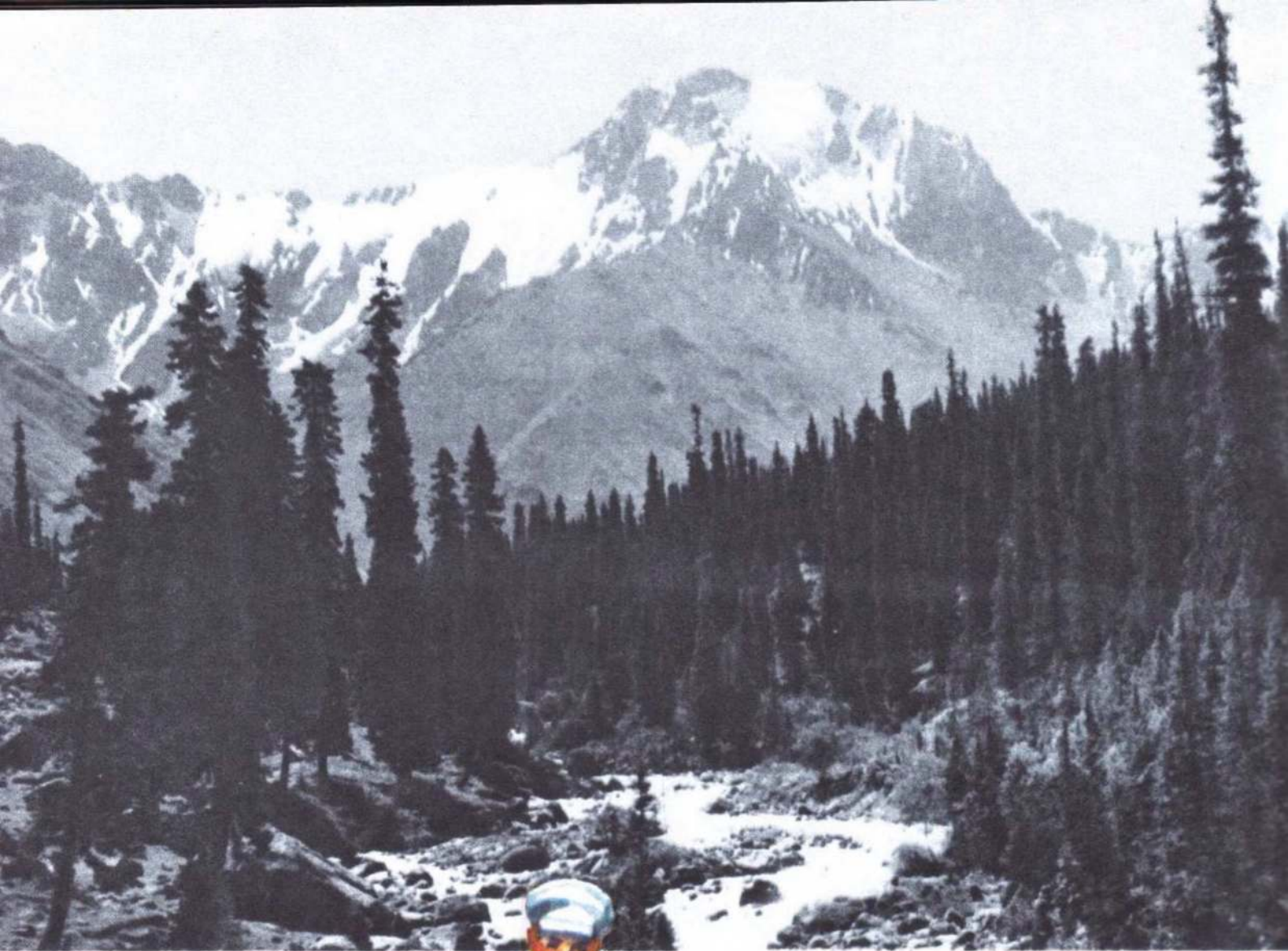
Armenians are industrious people, but we also love fun. We cannot live without songs, dances and music. And we are keen athletes. Armenia is a land of ancient culture, painting, architecture, music. Armenia of today is a land of science. The name of Armenia is recognised in any part of the globe.















Our land is called "The Roof of the World". Almost the entire territory of Tajikistan is mountainous country. Some of our villages cannot always be reached even by a plane. But nonetheless we live a very interesting life in our little town on the river Pyandj. Across the river lies Afghanistan. We are friendly with frontier guards and often visit them at their post. We also love to visit the Alpine Botanical Gardens and help the botanists to tend rare plants. All our boys are excellent horsemen and the girls are very good at embroidery and carpet-making.

A while ago some snake-catchers came to our town. They explained to us that snakes are very useful because of the medicinal properties of their venom, and so we never kill snakes any more.











We live in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia and a seaport of long standing. Now new residential districts have risen around the old centre of the city. They are very handsome, but still we prefer Old Tallinn's narrow streets, ancient store houses, churches and the famous Town Hall with Old Toomas on the weather-vane. Another favourite spot of ours is Pirita, on the seashore. There we have our own yachting club and we can swim and dive from a highboard. But most of all we love sailing. Even eight-year-olds go sailing on tiny yachts called *Optimists*. The older children are allowed to go farther out into the bay. We repair our yachts ourselves and manage the tackle on our own. After graduation many of us intend to enroll in a nautical school.





Such were the letters which came to Moscow.









Of course this book cannot include all the letters. But Moscow schoolchildren sent answers to every one of them. And so a correspondence was started. Some of the children decided to send pictures with their letters.









Very many letters asked about the New Year celebrations in Moscow. Well, this is something every Moscow child knows a lot about. Large New-Year trees are set up in Moscow's best concert halls and for two weeks the celebrations go on.

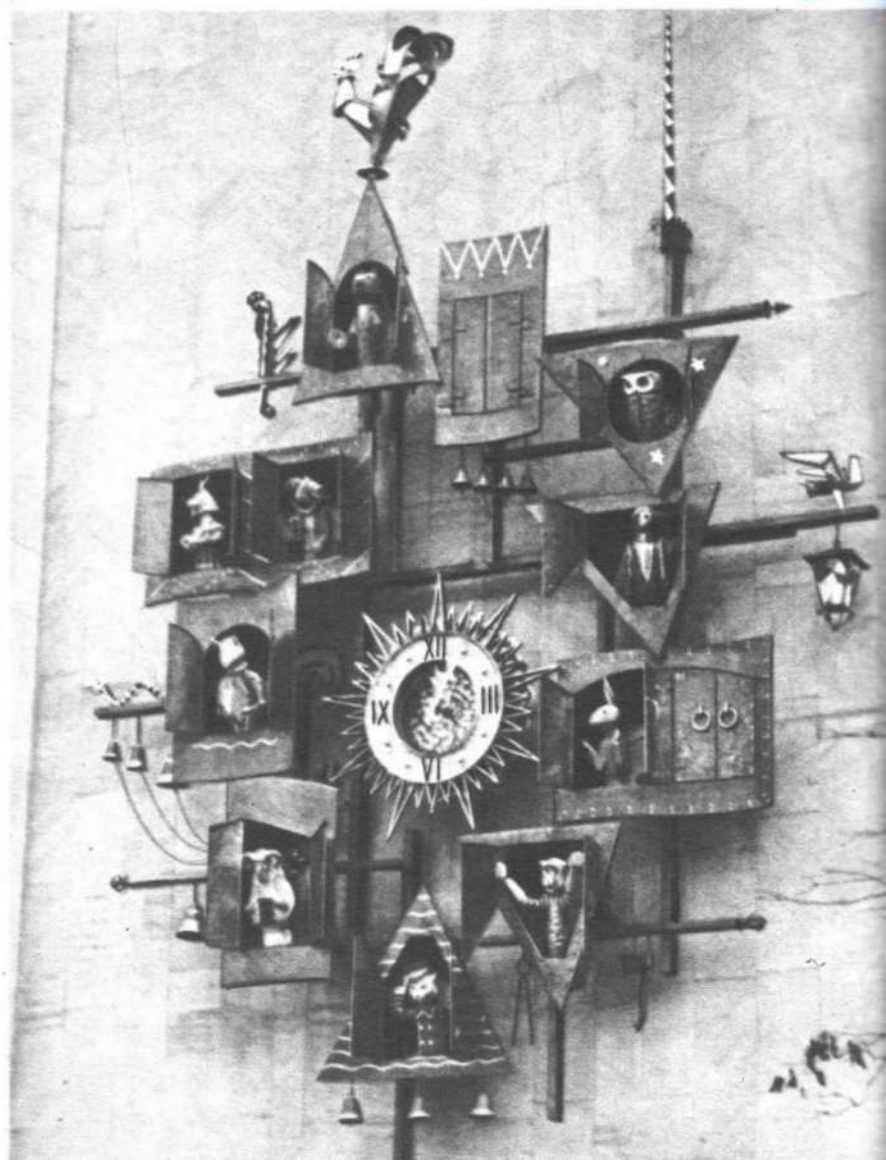
Hundreds of thousands of children come to these parties. Grandfather Frost and Snow Maiden give every child a present, and the children dance and play round the sparkling fir-trees. Acrobats, actors and jugglers perform for the children, or the children themselves recite poetry, sing and dance. These parties are great fun.















Very many questions have been asked about Sergei Obraztsov's Central Puppet Theatre.

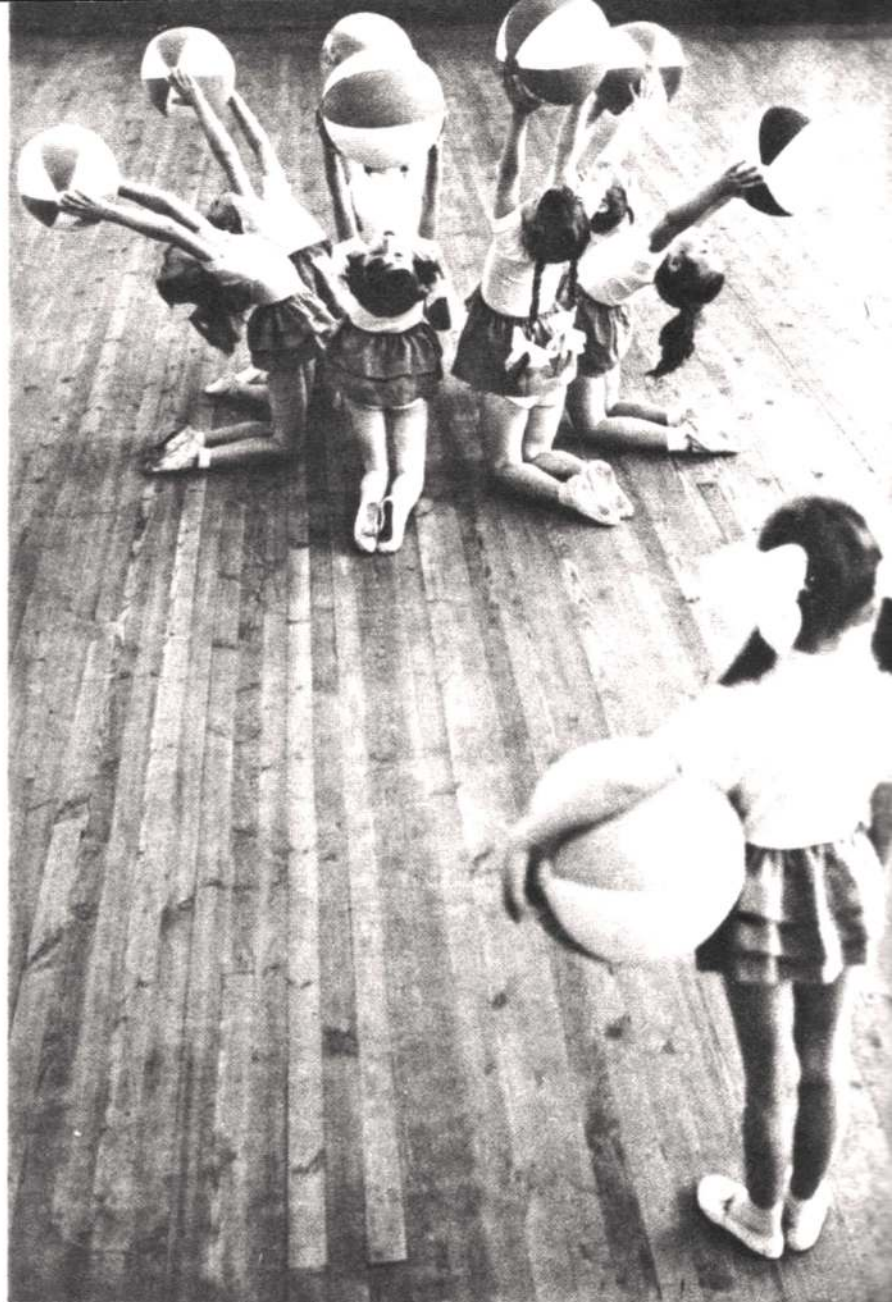
This is, indeed, a remarkable theatre, known the world over.

The Muscovites are lucky in that they can, at least, watch the "magic clock" on the theatre's façade, where puppets enact gay scenes every hour. But getting a ticket to Obraztsov's theatre is no easy matter. Everybody wants to see Obraztsov's puppets, and Moscow receives almost a million visitors every day.

Moscow also has a circus and children's theatres. There are also theatres where children do everything themselves. They are actors, musicians, make-up men, directors and playwrights. Such theatres are run by Young Pioneer Houses, schools and large arts centres.











From hot Ashkhabad children sent a letter asking, "We saw on TV that you do figure skating out in the open. And what happens when the ice melts? "

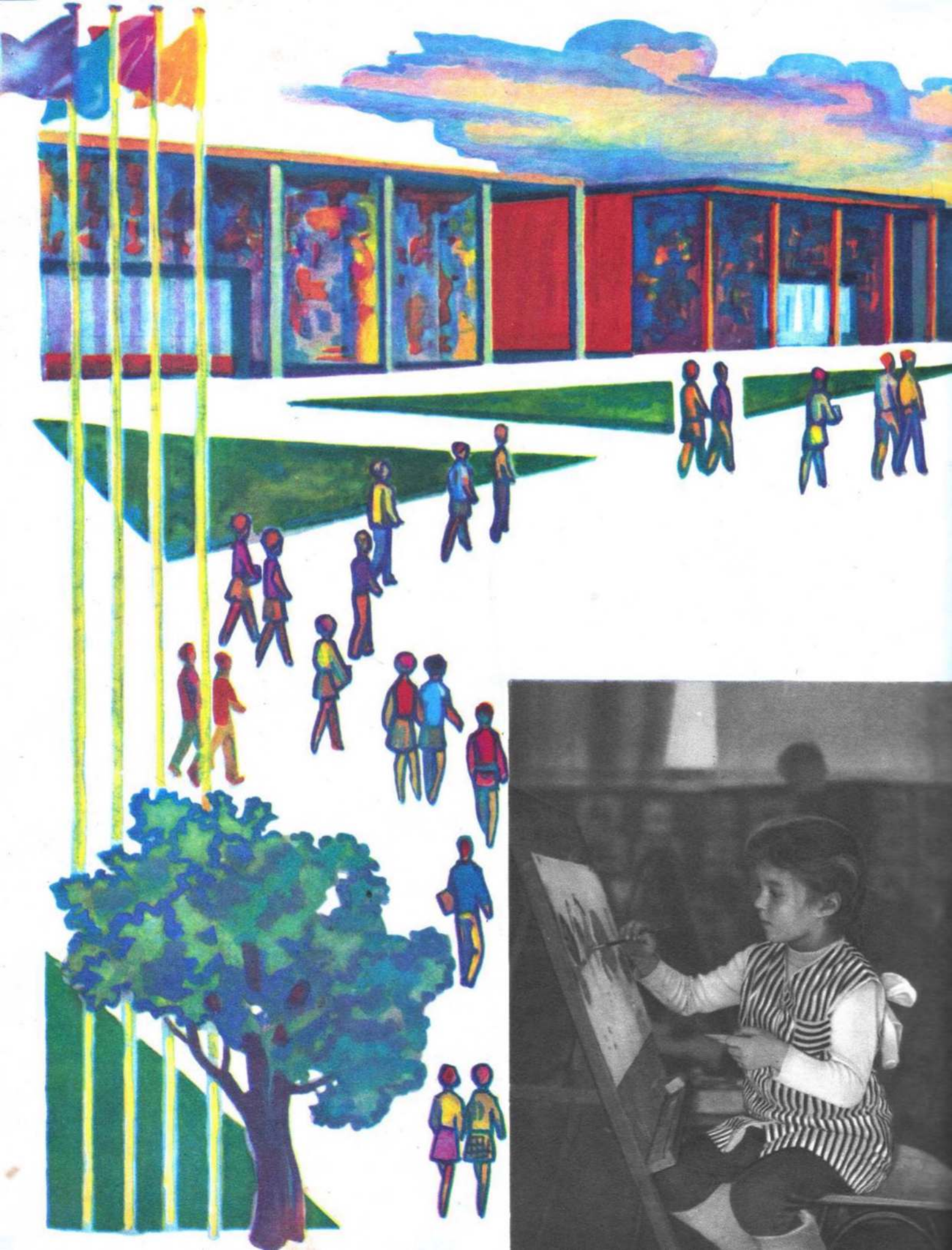
Moscow children answered them: "There are many children's sports schools in Moscow. These schools have gymnasiums and winter swimming pools and artificial ice skating rinks. So we can swim in winter and skate and play hockey in summer."

Moldavian children asked: "Do you like dancing? "

Moscow children wrote to Moldavia that choreography groups at Young Pioneer Houses not only teach children to dance folk dances, but instruct them in the art of classical dance. Many children who attend these classes go on to ballet studios.











There were so many questions asked about the Moscow Young Pioneer Palace, that Moscow children decided they would never be able to describe it all.

So they went to the Palace with cameras and photographed the toy model of a space station, a lesson of young artists, the gym and young puppeteers.

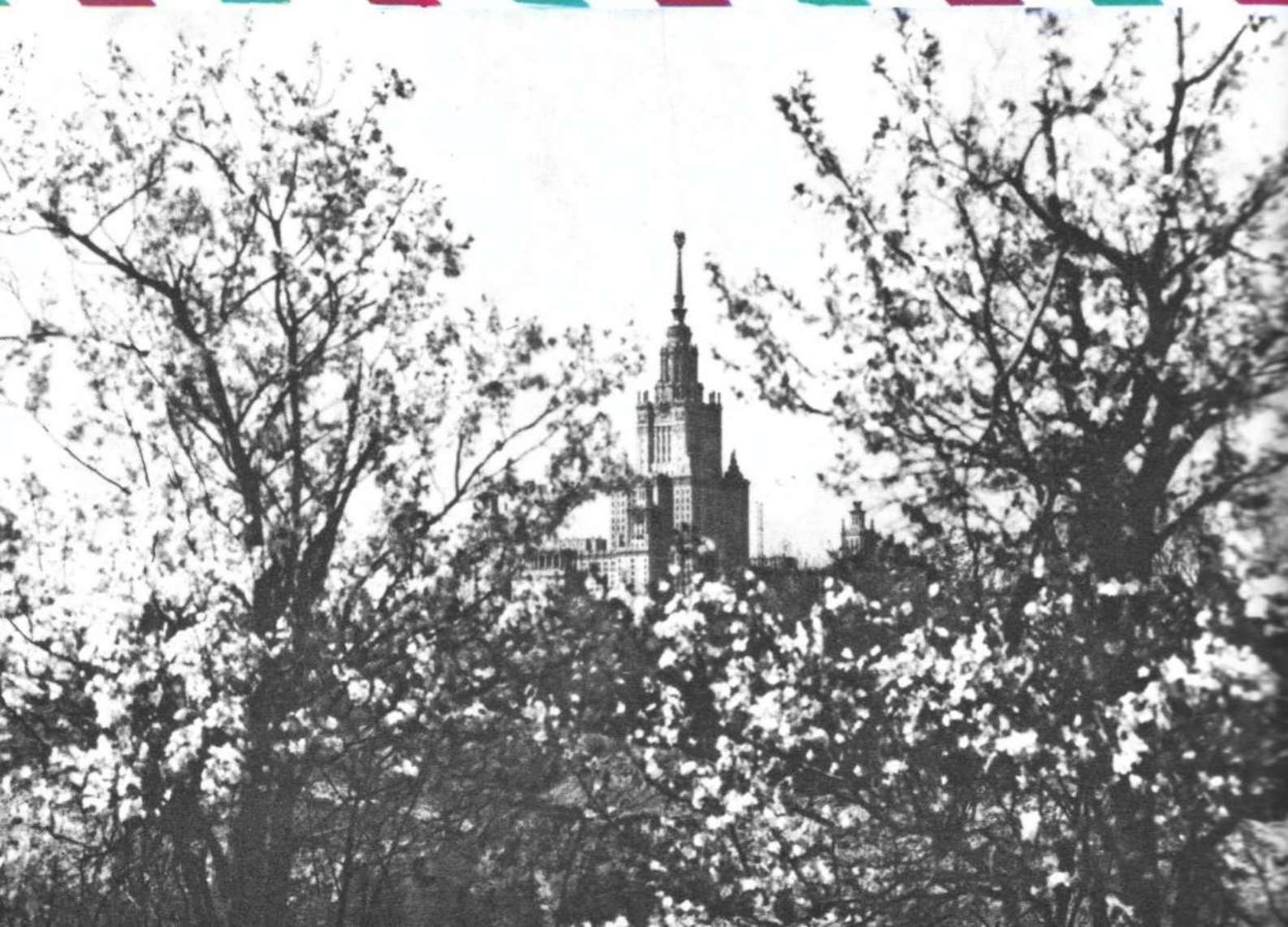
They made lots of copies of the snapshots and sent them to their friends to thousands of addresses.



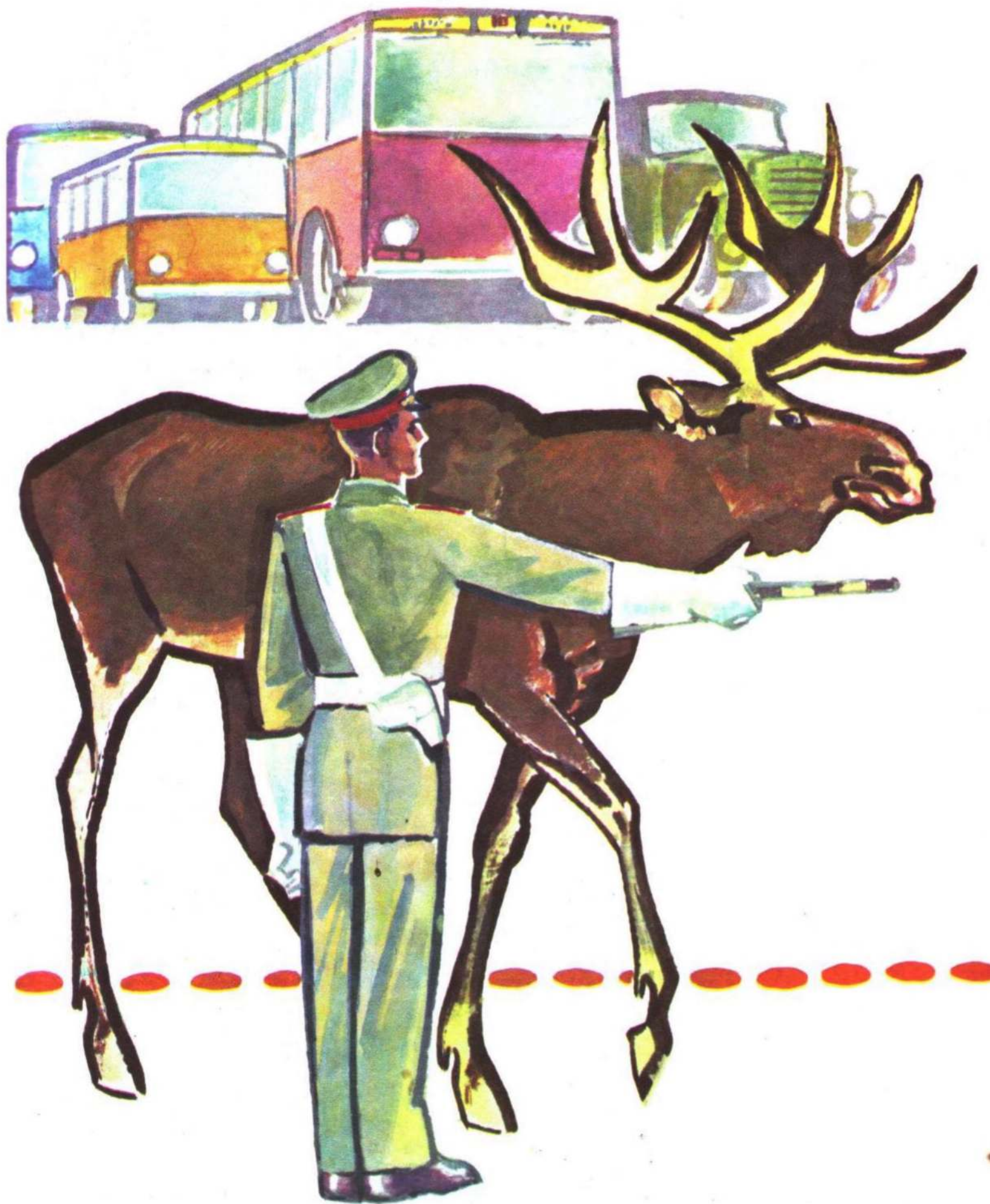


A letter came from Pamirs. "How can you breathe in Moscow?" asked Tajik children. "You have so many cars in the streets, there must be a lot of soot and fumes in the air. Don't they make the trees and grass wither?"

To this Moscow children answered that out of all big cities Moscow has the cleanest air. And our tap water is the purest of all, too. Dandelions grow in boulevards and grass lawns, and there are flower beds in every yard. There are woods all around Moscow. Sometimes young elks wander into the city streets. The traffic-militiaman has quite a job seeing that the forest guest did not get hurt in busy thoroughfares.

























Translated from the Russian by *Raissa Bobrova*

**А. Некрасов**

**ДРУЗЬЯ**

*На английском языке*

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